

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Journal

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Bill Hall

A Letter to Readers

I am extremely grateful to the dedicated men and women of our agency for their professional contribution to the safety of California's motorists. The departments within the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency comprise the Governor's principal transportation regulatory and enforcement organizations. By combining their resources, we are making driving safer, as evidenced by the fact that the number of fatalities per miles traveled is now the lowest in the state's history.

As Secretary for Transportation, I am committed to having the best traffic safety programs possible, including anti-DUI, bicycle and pedestrian safety, occupant protection, police traffic services, roadway safety and emergency medical services. These programs and so many others are helping California achieve its traffic safety successes, such as having the highest seat belt compliance rate in the nation.



Maria
Contreras-Sweet

I have a charge from Governor Gray Davis to improve safety on California's roadways. That means relieving traffic congestion, thus affording people more quality time for work and family life. We all enjoy getting home quickly and safely after a hard day's work.

One of our shared goals is to alleviate traffic congestion by stopping unsafe driving behaviors that contribute to accidents. Through funding for more law enforcement personnel and equip-

ment, emergency response vehicles and public education, we will make our roads even safer. We are also excited about the new partnerships being established with community-based organizations in California. This innovation will expand our outreach enormously. The Governor recently awarded \$11.8 million to local community-based organizations to promote traffic safety programs.

Traffic safety is everyone's business. Governor Davis and I look forward to working with all of you to improve the quality of life for all Californians.

A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Maria Contreras-Sweet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Maria Contreras-Sweet

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Editor's Notebook

*A*s I was preparing the story about Route 395, Caltrans' newest Scenic Highway to be found elsewhere in the pages of this journal, I had the pleasure of meeting "Buddy" Bayer, a Caltrans Maintenance Supervisor in Lee Vining. Buddy will have retired, after a career spent working on his beloved Route 395, by the time this journal is printed. Not only did he work on the road as a Caltrans employee, before that, he was an employee of the construction firm that built 395's long climb up the Conway Grade.

Buddy showed me and Don Tateishi, the photographer, a healthy measure of hospitality and even gave us each a copy of a book about Mono County, written by his mother. Just about anything you wanted to know about Mono County, Buddy could tell you about it. And Buddy knew the locations of every pothole, slipout and crack in Route 395's pavement.

As I drove down the highway to my next assignment, I couldn't help thinking, not only about Buddy, but our cadre of Maintenance Supervisors and Superintendents. I've known several of them well as I've bounced around Caltrans, and have been introduced to a lot more. These folks resemble nothing so much as sergeants and master sergeants in the U.S. Army. One of their unofficial duties, by the way, is to educate the fresh-faced novices that Headquarters sends out to supervise them every few years in the realities of keeping a road together.

Most of them are pretty gruff. You can read the years of hard work in punishing weather on most of their faces. Usually they don't look as if they've taken the Surgeon General's latest lifestyle advice very seriously. They eye a

flatlander from Headquarters in Bruno Magli loafers with some humor and not a little suspicion. They're knowledgeable about their roads and their territories, but they're something more. They're savvy. You want to get something done, go talk to a Maintenance Supe. They know the system, and better, they know what part of it works and what doesn't. And they have a knack of using the part that works and going around what doesn't. And if they have to, they'll take up a shovel and work right along with their troops.

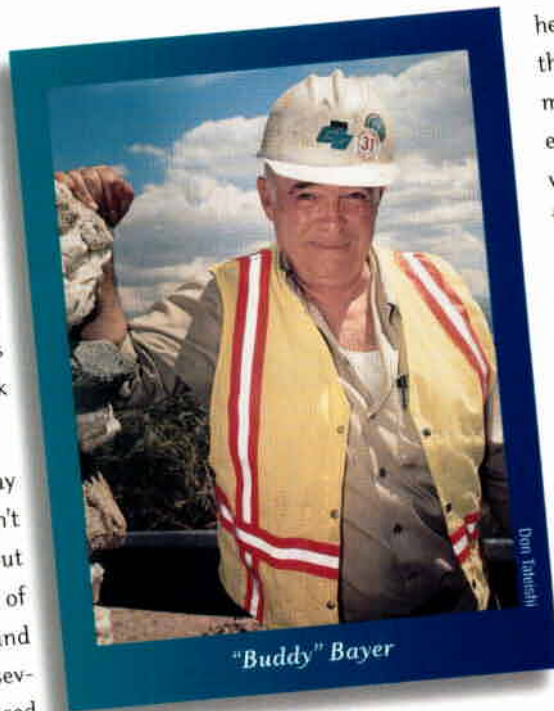
Many of them are bona fide heroes, actually having risked their lives to save those of motorists or their fellow workers. They're in a constant battle with Mother Nature and with forces that seek to take their roads apart, and for the most part they win. And when something really big comes along, like that mess in Walker Canyon a few years back, they take it personally and don't rest until matters are made right again.

The folks in District 9 like to call Buddy Bayer "The Buddha." I confess I kind of like that. A name like that speaks of wisdom, compassion, enlight-

enment and humor. Not bad qualities for a supervisor anyplace in Caltrans.

We thank Buddy for his many years of service and wish him well in retirement.

And we thank our maintenance supervisors and those who work for them for a job well done, often under arduous circumstances.





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